

Amazing claims are all over: on TV, online, and in magazines. Some companies might say they have a cure for something like acne, or an easy way to lose weight. They use buzz words like “ancient remedy,” “fast and easy,” “secret ingredient,” or “scientific breakthrough.” But these phrases are a good sign that you’ve found a fraud. So is encouragement to “act now because supplies are limited.”

The Pitch

People selling “miracle” cures want us to believe that it’s as easy as taking a pill (or using a cream or gadget).

- *Ancient remedy cures acne overnight!*
- *No risk...Money-back guarantee...Results guaranteed!*
- *Lose weight without diet or exercise! Eat all your favorite foods!*
- *Never diet again! Lose 30 pounds in 30 days!*

The promises these companies make sound great. And since ads for easy weight loss and miracle cures seem to be everywhere, you might think they must be truthful: maybe you just haven’t heard of this miracle yet.

Think again. Just because something is on TV or in print doesn’t mean it’s true. And just because someone in an ad says the product worked, it doesn’t mean it did. Sometimes, people endorse or recommend a product just because they’re paid to do it. And sometimes, they’re just models or actors in a costume.

When the claims for a product sound good – even when the claim says “completely safe” – it doesn’t mean it’s safe to take it. Before you spend money on products that make big promises, talk to a parent, a teacher, or another adult you trust. Then talk with your doctor, even before you take something that’s a “dietary supplement,” that’s “completely safe,” and that doesn’t need a prescription.

Weight loss ads seem to show up in magazines and on programs and websites that are popular with young girls. If you talk with a doctor, a dietician, your school nurse or another expert, they’ll tell you that the only proven way to lose weight is to eat less and exercise more. Losing weight and keeping it off takes work.



Where to Complain

If you've bought a bogus health or weight loss product:

- Contact your state Attorney General. Find the phone number at www.naag.org
- Notify the Better Business Bureau, which can help prevent other people from falling for the same scam. www.bbb.org
- File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission, the nation's consumer protection agency: www.ftc.gov/complaint

Things to Talk About and Do

- Find an ad for a "miracle" cure or weight loss product and discuss the kinds of claims they make. Do they seem to be scientific? Do you think they really are?

Want to Find Out More?

Federal Trade Commission
www.ftc.gov

It's That Easy!

The infomercial was amazing: It showed people who supposedly lost weight just by wearing a patch! According to the ad, sticking a seaweed-based skin patch on your upper body and replacing it every few days would cause a loss of three to five pounds a week. No other changes were required. As the announcer said, "It's that easy!"

A chemist even talked about how the patch delivered ingredients into the bloodstream, increasing metabolism, suppressing appetite, and reducing fat cell production. Sounds scientific, right? And person after person talked about how much weight they'd lost!

But the FTC said the claims were false – and the company didn't have the scientific proof the law requires. The FTC forced the company to stop running the ad, and worked out an agreement where the company returned more than \$1 million to the consumers who had bought the patch.

